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2017

1-15-2017

ENG 4903-001: Young Adult Literature

Jamila Smith

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Jamila, "ENG 4903-001: Young Adult Literature" (2017). *Spring 2017*. 71.
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ENG 4903
Young Adult Literature
Spring 2017
Office: Coleman Hall 3775
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Mondays 1:00-2:00pm
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****Please don't contact me via D2L, as I often don't receive those emails.**

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce you to a range of literature for young adults (ages 12-18) as well as provide you with a variety of critical tools for reading, discussing, and writing about the literature. Through the readings, lectures, films, and discussions (both in small and large groups) we will examine the intricacies of multiculturalism in young adult literature; we will explore the role of multiple literacies as pedagogical and theoretical sights of learning; we will write and perform thoughtful, insightful prose; and, finally, yet fundamentally, we will examine the literature from a critical lens.

In this course, special attention will be given to the role of the “other” in young adult literature. As defined by Clarke (2004), “Othering is a process that identifies those that are thought to be different from oneself or the mainstream, and it can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination” (p.1). As such, we will examine how the other gets taken up in young adult literature and its cultural implications for readers on micro and macro levels.

Course Themes: Identity & Culture; Education & Society; Media, Technology; and Popular Culture

Learning Goals:

- Awareness of and excitement for a wide variety of young adult literature and elements of story.
- Awareness of historical developments related to this literature and understanding of the varied social contexts in which it has been produced.
- Experience with literature-related activities that may be used with young adults.
- Exploration of cultural relevancy in pedagogy along with multiculturalism and social justice, to include such topics as intersections of race, place, gender, class, age, and (dis)ability in multiple contexts.
- Exploration of The Ballenger Teacher Resource Center's selection of YA lit.
- Experience with self-selecting literature grounded in theme, cultural relevancy, and contemporary occurrences in the lives of today's adolescents.

Required Texts:

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian (Alexie)

Thirteen Reasons Why (Asher)
Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes (Crutcher)
Mockingbird (Erskine)
Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time (Haddon)
The First Part Last (Johnson)
A Step From Heaven (Na)
American Born Chinese (Yang)

*You will also be required to read self-selected texts from the library.

**Additionally, handouts will be distributed throughout the semester

Special Needs:

Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (581.6583) as soon as possible so we can work out appropriate accommodations.

Cell Phones:

Please put your cell phone on silent or vibrate during class time.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>).

Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

The Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

The Writing Center:

I encourage you to use EIU's Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free service provides one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, and documenting your papers.

The writing center is open to help any student from any major at any stage of his or her writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress.

To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929. The writing center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Friday hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Course Guidelines and Expectations:

1. As this is an interactive course, participation is required. You help create this atmosphere by asking questions during class discussion and group work, and by responding thoughtfully to other people's comments and responses. Participation is worth **40 points** of your grade and includes self-directed discussion, questions posed during class, ability to answer questions indicative of close textual reading, and being alert during class sessions (i.e., no cell phone activity, sleeping, disruptive conversations, or use of laptops/Ipads/tablets, etc for anything other than work for my class). Points will be deducted for behaviors indicative of anything other than full participation. This is a collaborative learning experience, so constructive criticism and open discussion is encouraged. Attendance is obviously a prerequisite for participation, so if you have more than three (3) unexcused absences, you will lose 5 points per class session you miss.
2. Absences will only be excused when the following conditions are met: a) Circumstances that can be documented on paper (illness, police accident report, university events, etc) b) I receive notification PRIOR to the class that you will be unable to attend. If there is an assignment due the day you will be absent, please email it to me Prior to the start of class. In the same manner, I expect each student to be on time to class. If you happen to be tardy, please do not disrupt the class. If you are over 10 minutes late to class with no prior notification, you will be marked absent.
3. You are expected to have ALL assignments prepared to turn in on the due date. All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font. Please proofread and edit all papers. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED OR MAKE-UP WORK PROVIDED** unless you are in compliance with the extreme circumstances section above. Do not put extra space between paragraphs. Student information (name, class title, assignment) is single-spaced, in the top left-hand corner of your paper. Additionally, you are expected to bring the proper supplies with you to class each session, including the text we're reading.

Caveat:

If class participation begins to fade, I reserve the right to distribute a pop quiz over the readings and/or class lectures. The quiz will be worth 10 points and will be taken from the final project.

Assignments:

1. Critical Commentary (20 points a piece/40 points total) For this assignment, you will use the writing prompts below to develop typed, four-page, double-spaced critical arguments.

#1 Contemporary realistic fiction is a highly controversial genre in adolescent literature, full of banned and censored books. In this commentary, I'd like for you to write a critical review of *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* that analyses their usefulness (or lack thereof) in being taught in a classroom, possible connections you

think young people could make with the books, your thoughts on the controversial elements of the texts, and finally, a letter grade that you would give each text and why.

DUE February 15th

#2 After reading the novels, *Mockingbird* and *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, discuss the progression of your reaction to the texts. Describe your experience (if any) with special needs students and how these texts measure up. What are potential take-a-ways for readers? What may be lost in translation? Describe (in detail) at least two assignments you would provide students to move them from awareness to activism. **DUE April 7th**

2. Book Club (20 points)

For this assignment, you will self-select a novel from the category, “Book Awards” and present your takeaways from the text in relation to the award it received. You will present these findings in any creative format of your choosing. The idea is to get your classmates so eager to read the text that they would want to be in your book club. You are NOT allowed to choose any of the required novels we’re covering this semester. Your presentation should address elements of multiculturalism and diversity that readers and current/future teachers may find useful. Each student will have 3-4 minutes to present. We will discuss this in further detail during the semester.

Book Awards- Select a book that has received one of the following awards:

Pura Belpre Award: Presented to a Latino/a writer/illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth.

Michael L. Printz: Awarded to a book that exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature.

Odyssey Award: Presented to the producer of the best audiobook produced for children and/or young adults, available in English in the United States

Coretta Scott King Award: Recognizes outstanding books for young adults and children by African American authors and illustrators that reflect the African American experience.

National Book Award: Annual U.S. literary awards for exemplary writing in the fields of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and young people’s literature. **DUE February 24th**

3. Book Pairing and Paper: (40 points)

Though we will cover multiple book pairings throughout the semester, for this assignment, you will read *American Born Chinese* and *A Step From Heaven* and write a 8-10 page argumentative essay. Details will be distributed during the semester. **DUE March 27th**

4. Final Project (60 points)

In lieu of a final exam, you will produce a final project. Specific details of this assignment will be distributed during the semester. **DUE April 28th**

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

**Please be prepared for possible changes to this schedule.*

January 2017: Introduction to YA Lit/Multiculturalism/Contemporary Realistic Fiction/Cultural Relevance

- 9th (M) First Class: Introduction to course and one another.
11th (W) Discussion of syllabus
13th (F) Activity on cultural awareness
16th (M) **NO SCHOOL-Observance of MLK**
Assignment: Begin reading *Absolutely True Diary*
18th (W) Begin Movie
20th (F) Finish Movie
Assignment: Complete Alexie novel and watch “The Danger of the Single Story TED Talk on YouTube”)
23rd (M) Discussion of Alexie novel in small and large groups and Adichie video
25th (W) Continued discussion of novel
27th (F) Final activity
Lions in Winter 1/27 and 1/28--Craft Talk with Children's Lit Author Janice Harrington on January 28th—Register at
<http://www.lionsinwinter.org/registration/>
Assignment: Begin reading *The First Part Last*
30th (M) Discussion of contemporary realistic fiction/Multicultural literature for young adults
Assignment: Complete novel

February 2017: CRF, cont/Book Awards

- 1st (W) Discussion of *First Part Last*. Handout on CRP
Assignment: Begin Thirteen Reasons why
3rd (F) Final discussion of novel
Assignment: Complete Thirteen Reasons why
6th (M) Discussion of novel
8th (W) Continued discussion
Assignment: Begin *Sarah Byrnes*
10th (F) Discussion of book and critical commentary #1
13th (M) Continued discussion of book and assignment
15th (W) **Critical Commentary #1 DUE**
17th (F) Lincoln Day Observed-**NO SCHOOL**
20th (M) Visit Library for Book Club project
22nd (W) Work on Project
24th (F) **Book Club Presentation DUE**

27th (M) Presentations

March 2017: Informational Texts, Memoir, Graphic Novel

1st (W) Finish Presentations
Assignment: Begin reading *A Step From Heaven*
3rd (F) Begin movie
6th (M) Finish movie
8th (W) Discussion of movie and novel
10th (F) Final discussion of novel and begin discussion of Book Pairing Paper
13th-17th **SPRING BREAK**
Assignment: Complete *American Born Chinese* and research for book pairing paper
20th (M) Discussion of Novel
22nd (W) Finish discussion
24th (F) Work day for paper
27th (M) **Book Pairing Paper DUE**
Assignment: Begin reading *Mockingbird*
29th (W) Discussion of Final Project
Assignment: Complete *Mockingbird*
31st (F) Discussion of Novel

April 2017: CRF, Final Project

3rd (M) Finish discussion
Assignment: Begin *Curious Incident*
5th (W) Work day on final project
Assignment: Finish reading
7th (F) Begin discussion of novel
10th (M) Continued discussion
12th (W) **English Studies Day**
14th (F) Final discussion of novel and discussion of final critical commentary
17th (M) Final discussion of assignment
19th (W) **Critical Commentary #2 DUE**
21st (F) Work day on final project
24th-26th Independent work days
28th (F) **FINAL PROJECT DUE**

Evaluation:

Participation	40 points
Book Club	20 points
Book Pairings and Paper	40 points
Critical Commentary	40 points (total)
Final Project	60 points
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Total	200 points

Grading:

180-200=A 179-160=B 159-140=C 139-120=D 119 or below=F

****Dr. Smith's Advice****

If at any point throughout the semester you are confused or unclear about the expectations of the course, course material, a grade you've received, or any other matters, I strongly encourage you to come talk with me during office hours. It is my goal that all students succeed in this course, but I can only help if I'm aware of a problem.